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Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07
FRB-03 INR-07 NSAE-00 USIA-06 TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03
SP-02 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 L-03 PRS-01 PA-01
AGRE-00 FEAE-00 INT-05 /073 W
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8597
INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN
AMEMBASSY ACCRA
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
AMEMBASSY COTONOU
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY LONDON

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E. O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: ELAB, NI
SUBJECT: FMG ANNOUNCES TRADE UNION RESTRUCTURING PROGRAM

1. SUMMARY. FMG HAS SUBMITTED TOSLABOR LEADERS ITS "DRAFT" PLAN TO MERGE NUMEROUS NIGERIAN TRADE UNIONS INTO THIRTY-ONEINDUSTRY-WIDE GROUPS NEXT MONTH. WHILE SUCH RESTRUCTURING OF LABOR MOVEMENT HAS LONG BEEN URGED BY TRADE UNIONISTS, GOVERNMENT HAS AGAIN DEMONSTRATED ITS INTENTION TO CONTROL THE PACE AND NATRUE OF SLOWLY EMERGING NEW NATIONAL NIGERIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. END SUMMARY.

2. FMG'S TRADE UNION ADMINISTRATOR, M. O. ABIODUM, SUBMITTED TO LABOR LEADERS JANUARY 7 "DRAFT" PLAN TO RESTRUCTURE NIGERIAN LABOR MOVEMENT BY MERGING ESTIMATED ONE THOUSAND TRADE UNIONS INTO THIRTY-ONE INDUSTRY-WIDE BODIES. LABOR CHIEFS HAVE UNTIL END THIS MONTH TO COMMENT ON PLAN--PROGRAM
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TO GO INTO EFFECT IN FEBRUARY. IN MEANTIME, ALL UNIONS PRESENTLY REGISTERED MUST SURRENDER THEIR CERTIFICATES AND NO NEW INDIVIDUAL UNIONS WILL BE REGISTERED. ABIODUN ALSO ANNOUNCED THAT COMMITTEE, MEMBERS OF WHICH WILL BE DRAWN FROM VARIETY OF UNIONS, WILL BE ESTABLISHED TO FORMULATE CONSTITUTIONS FOR INDUSTRIAL UNIONS AND TO PLAN ELECTIONS, INAUGURAL ACTIVITIES.

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3. IN ANNOUNCING NEW PROGRAM, ADMINISTRATOR ADVISED LABOR LEADERS TO AVOID INFIGHTING AND STRESSED FOLLOWING GENERAL PRINCIPLES TO GOVERN NEW UNION ORGANIZATIONS: NO UNION SHOULD BE TOO LARGE OR SMALL TO IMPAIR DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES OR EFFICIENCY; EACH UNION SHOULD HAVE CLEAR AND SPECIFIC JURISDICTION DEFINABLE IN TERMS WORK OPERATIONS, OCCUPATION OR CRAFT; EACH INDUSTRIAL UNION SHOULD CONSIST TO EXTENT POSSIBLE OF NON-COMPETING GROUPS; DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES MUCT BE GUARANTEED; UNION EXECUTIVES SHOULD BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS. ABIODUN ALSO SAID THAT UIONS SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON BARGAINING TACTICS AND INTERNAL STABILITY RATHER THAN IDEOLOGY: QUOTE. RATIONALIZATION OF UNION STRUCTURE, WHICH WILL HELP UNION EFFECTIVENESS, MUST FLOW FROM THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION RATHER THAN FROM ANY PRECONCEIVED DOCTRINE. UNQUOTE.

4. COMMENT. TIMING OF GOVERNMENT MOVE ON RESTRUCTURING LABOR MOVEMENT IS SOMETHING OF A SURPRISE COMING AS IT HAS BEFORE PUBLICATION OF TRADE UNION INQUIRY REPORT AND COMPANION WHITE PAPER (LAGOS 13860). IT WAS GENERALLY THOUGHT THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD FORMALLY COMPLETE TRADE UNION CLEANS-ING OPERATION BY IDENTIFYING AND PROSCRIBING CORRUPT LEADERS AND WOULD ENUNCIATE FUTURE PLANS PRIOR TO MOVING POSITIVELY TO REORGANIZE LABOR MOVEMENT. LABOR LEADERS HAVE LONG SOUGHT GOVERNMENT AGREEMENT AND HELP IN RESTRUCTURING UNIONS IN ORDER INCREASE MOVEMENT'S CLOUT BUT PREVIOUSLY THOUGHT IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FIRST TO ESTABLISH SINGLE NATIONAL CONFED-ERATION, THE NIGERIAN LABOR CONGRESS (NLC), AND THEN WORK
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ON INDUSTRYWIDE AFFILIATES. IN SEVERAL MONTHS SINCE INITIAL DISQUIETUDE OVER FMG'S DECISION LAST SUMMER NOT TO RECOGNIZE NLC, MANY TRADE UNIONISTS HAVE COME AROUND TO IDEA THAT RESTRUCTURING MIGHT PROPERLY PRECEDE ESTABLISHMENT OF HLC. GOVERNMENT HAD PROMISED TO FACILITATE RESTRUCTURING BUT UNTIL JANUARY 7 HAD DONE NOTHING TO IMPLEMENT ITS WORD. GOVERNMENT'S MOVE(TH ADMINISTRATOR'S FIRST PROGRAMMATIC ACTION SINCE HIS APPOINTMENT IN LATE SEPTEMBER) ALSO APPEARS TO OFFER TIMELY CARROT (AFTER MORE THAN A YEAR OF STICKS) TO ALLEVIATE PRESSURES WHICH PRESUMABLY ARE NOW BUILDING UP TO MARCH 31 DATE WHEN FMG MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO EXTEND PRESENT SIX-MONTHS OLD WAGE FREEZE.

5. ABIODUN'S REMARKS ON DEMOCRACY AND ACCOUNTABILITY REFLECT GOVERNMENT'S INTENTION TO KEEP PRESSURE ON FREEWHEELING LABOR CHIEFS. HIS APPEAL TO UIONISTS TO STICK TO PRACTICAL MATTERS IS AIMED NOT ONLY AT AVOIDING IDEOLOGICAL RIFTS THAT HAVE PLAGUED LABOR MOVEMENT IN PAST BUT MAY ALSO REPRESENT AN ATTEMPT TO KEEP LABOR BODIES OUT OF POLITICS. IF FMG

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NOW FOLLOWS THROUGH ON ITS PROMISE TO INSTITUTE MANDATORY CHECK-OFF SYSTEM, NEW UNIONS AND THEIR CENTRAL CONFEDERATION WOULD PRESUMABLY BE FREED FROM FORMER NEED TO ACCEPT FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AND THROUGH IT FOREIGN INFLUENCE AND IDEOLOGY.

6. IN SUM, WHILE GIVING APPEARANCE OF ACCEDING TO TRADE UNIONISTS' URGINGS, FMG IS USING CARROTS AND STICKS TO CONTROL PACE AND DETERMINE THE FORM OF THE NOW SLOWLY EMERGMING NEW NATIONAL NIGERIAN TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.
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